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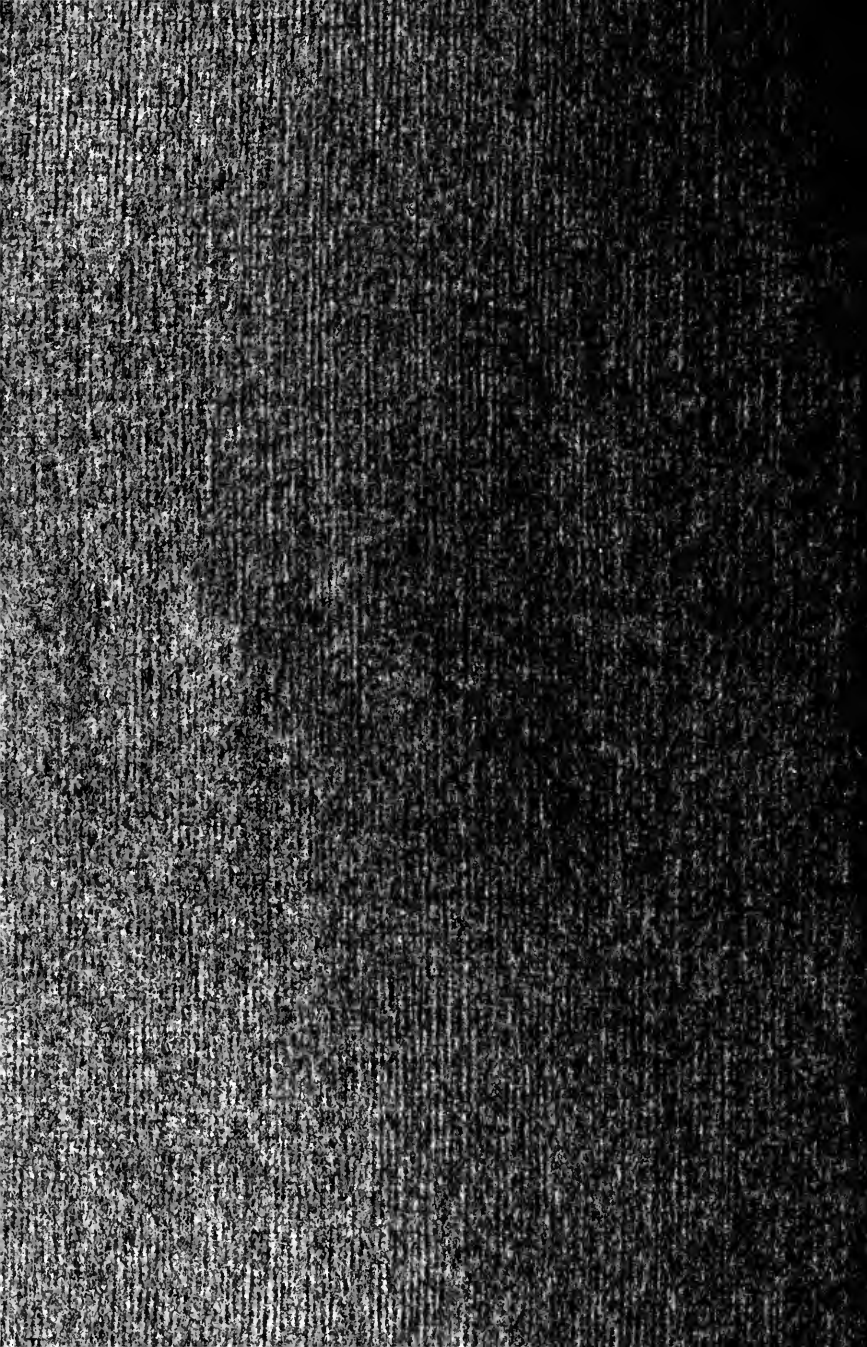
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# BOOK OF VERSES

N G H A M



# A Book of Verses

BY  
Alice Hathaway Cunningham



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New York  
1910

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“A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,  
A loaf of bread, a jug of wine—and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness.  
Ah, Wilderness were Paradise enow.”

—*Omar Khayyam.*





# A BOOK OF VERSES

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## AFFLUENCE.

Love perched up on the window-seat  
Poverty stood by the door,  
While Jane and I shared the only chair  
And smiled at the bare walls and floor.

"I'll be very sorry to go," said Love,  
"But I realize my position,  
Where Poverty lives I may not stay,  
According to tradition.

"And as you have naught of silver and gold,  
And naught of jewels rare,  
Dame Poverty's come to take my place,—  
And will your dwelling share."

"Oh, Love," I cried, in exasperation,  
"You surely must be blind!  
Why, here is wealth more great than kings'  
With happiness combined.

"And tho' we have not gold and pearls  
We know what perfect bliss is.  
So stay and sup with us, dear friend,  
On bread and cheese—and kisses!"

DESTINY.

Not a crust today, but a feast tomorrow,  
A little of joy,—and much of sorrow.  
A day of peace with years of strife;  
Blindfolded we go,—and this is *Life!*

Joy to the beggar and grief to the king,  
A laughing sob as we try to sing,  
Then cast away care as you would a glove,—  
The world is yours,—and this is *Love!*

Surcease of pain so some of them tell  
And a just reward for your good deeds, well—  
At least 'tis the ending of all breath.  
We'll know *something* at last,—and this is *Death!*

IMMORTAL.

Fair Love is dead you say? I laugh.  
*You* cannot tell the wheat from chaff;  
Within my heart the tears are dried,  
Had Love been Love he had not died!

Sweet Love is dead? I, knowing, smile.  
He is but sleeping for a while,  
And those who say 'tis death but lie,  
Love that is Love can never die!

Fond Love is dead? Oh! fool, you speak  
Like Love were mortal, frail and weak.  
He is no slave, convention tied,  
Had this been Love—it had not died!

LOVE'S CHILD.

He clung to me,—a tiny thing,  
And warm against my breast  
I kept him close, he was so weak,  
I loved him far the best.  
He grew apace, his baby feet  
I guided with such care  
Along the road, my hands were torn  
By thorns that sprang  
To wound him, unaware.  
  
The World called him, so sweetly soft  
It called in accents low,  
He left my side,—a sturdy youth,  
I grieved to see him go.  
My hours were bare; my day of Joy  
Had not survived its dawn,  
And then he passed,—I cried his name  
In agony,  
He glanced at me in scorn!

IGNORANCE.

I never knew until you came  
How golden was the dawn.  
How green the grass,—  
How winds that pass  
In flowers' hearts were born!  
  
I never knew until you went  
How bleak the day could be.  
How roses sear,—  
How skies are drear,  
How desolate the sea!

---

IN A GARDEN.

(Morning.)

Lotus buds blush by the fountain's brink  
As Phoebus comes over the hills.  
A lark stops his raptures a moment to drink,—  
Then higher and sweeter he trills.

(Noon.)

Pale butterflies languidly float o'er the wall  
Dreaming of roses and June.  
Fat bumblebees answer the white lilies' call,—  
Humming a lazy tune.

(Night.)

Prim hollyhocks stand in a haughty row  
Watching the fireflies play.  
Sweet zephyrs idly a lullaby blow,—  
The poppies drowsily sway.

TRYSTING SONG.

Beloved, to-night is mine!  
Full soon the rushing day  
Will fleck with gold the mountain pine,—  
And I must speed away.

Beloved, to-night is mine!  
The crimson of your mouth  
Runs through my veins like living wine  
Made in the dreaming South.

Beloved, to-night is mine!  
And all the world can die.  
My cheek pressed close to thine,—  
Life's naught but thou and I!

THE WHITE ROSE.

You sent me a rose of white,  
A pure symbol of the dead;  
You sent me a rose of white  
That yesterday was of red.  
Its petals fall one by one  
Like pearls from a golden chain,  
They tell me the story I know full well—  
I am never to see you again!  
For the love that was mine in the Autumn  
Could not be mine in the Spring.  
You said that a woman was mad  
Who dreamed of such a thing.  
So I bade you farewell with laughter,  
And broke my heart with a song,  
While the cry of my soul was stifled—  
For the pride of a woman is strong.  
But this do I know,—when another  
Is lying caressed in your arms,—  
Whether you are mid the city's strife  
Or under the tropic's palms,—  
The breath of my warm sweet kisses  
Will storm your heart's calm ease,  
And your thoughts will fly to me again  
From over the Seven Seas.  
For the flame of that old desire  
That held us fast in its grip  
Will sear the whiteness of *her* throat  
And burn the sweet from *her* lip.  
For the love that died with the roses  
Was quick in the Fall when we met;  
Its buried deep—'neath the rosemary,—  
It will not let you forget!

---

MOCKERY.

We said good-by; our hands scarce met  
In token of farewell.  
I lightly thought I could forget,—  
And tolled Love's passing bell.

. . . .

It was the Spring; the woods and hills  
Forth in new raiment came.  
The running brooks and dancing rills  
Did whisper but your name.

Then Summer comes; And over all  
The earth sheds sweetness rare.  
The scents from myriad flowers recall  
The perfume of your hair.

'Tis Autumn; And the birds now wing  
Their way swift to the south.  
A thousand tints of scarlet sing  
The glory of your mouth.

Grim Winter; Through my frosted pane  
The wood in silver coat.  
Each falling snowflake brings again  
The whiteness of your throat.

. . . .

We said good-by; Each went their way  
As tho' we ne'er had met.  
Love cold and stark between us lay,—  
I thought I could forget!

THE TWAIN.

Down by the road of Time I sat,  
And watched the crowding throng;  
And some were merry and some were sad,  
For the way was long, so long.  
And one there was who bent in grief,  
Her tears fell with each breath.  
"But why do you cry as with fear?" I asked;  
"I am Life, and I weep at Death!"  
And there was another, with cap and bells,  
Who laughed 'midst all the strife.  
"Oh, why do you smile, when others are sad?"  
"I am Death, and I laugh at Life!"

TWO FOOLS.

"Oh thou art a fool,"  
Said my head to my heart,  
"And unless you do better  
We surely must part.  
"For you falter and jump  
At the smile of a miss,  
And you race madly on  
At the thought of a kiss!"  
But my heart answered  
Never a word to my head,  
For then Doris came by—  
The maid I would wed.  
And my head whirled round  
At her blushes so red.—  
"Shall we part then, Oh fool?"  
Said my heart to my head.

THE GUEST.

Love lingered awhile at my neighbor's gate  
Then laughed and rode away,  
But I envied her tears as she watched him go—  
For she had had her day.  
Love paused beside another's door  
And called a merry greeting;  
I turned away my face in pain,—  
I could not bear the meeting.  
For I swept and garnished my poor abode  
For Love one summer day,  
With flowers of Youth and Hope and Joy  
I gayly strewed the way;  
I stood to greet him at the door,  
My heart sang—"Love is nigh!"  
He came down the road with princely stride  
And unseeing passed me by!

HOPE.

She is the travel-mate of Youth  
Who hides the nakedness of Truth.  
She sheds a sweetness over Age,  
And holds a lamp to light the Sage.  
She tinsels Poverty's wretched plight,  
And makes the stars to pierce the night.  
Lifts broken flowers after the rain;  
Tells parted friends they shall meet again.  
With Love she journeys a-down the way  
And blinds his eyes with visions gay.  
She threads golden music through Life's prose,  
And veils grim Oblivion with rose.



## THE AWAKENING.

So still we sat in that quiet room,  
My shattered Love and I,  
I had bound his wounds with gentle care  
And hushed his frightened cry.

"Now he will sleep," I whispered low,  
"He will have some rest at last."  
What sent you here that night of all nights  
With a smile from out the Past?

Were not the scars quite deep enough  
That you must come to see?  
Awakening Love from his dreamless sleep—  
With a smile not meant for me!

## FORGETTING.

I have forgotten all, yes, everything  
That ever had to do with you.  
I have forgotten that your clasp was warm,  
Your mocking eyes deep blue.  
I have forgotten. Why should I recall  
The day you crushed me to your heart,—  
Those things are dead, were buried deep  
The time we two did part.  
I have forgotten. As the moon arising  
Makes of old Earth a silver garden spot—  
What care I when lovers pass me smiling?  
They dream, poor fools. For me—I have forgot.

### THE MASKER.

"We must part," I said to my Sorrow,  
"So good-bye forever and aye.  
I have had enough of your tears and woes,  
I will part from you to-day.

"For Life, tho' short, should be merry,—  
I'll take Pleasure in your place,"  
But as Sorrow turned to go her way  
I saw a grim smile on her face.

"Come hither, come hither, Oh Pleasure," I called,  
"Come, let us two dance a measure,  
For old Sorrow is gone, and in her stead  
I will have you for my treasure!"

And as we danced in the wildest glee,  
With never a thought for the morrow,  
In the guise of Pleasure,—with smiling mask,  
I found that my partner was Sorrow!

### LIFE'S GAMBLE.

My soul turned from its God for you  
And wandered far 'midst thorn and rue,  
And then came one who snatched the prize  
I strove so hard to gain.  
Now memory sends wild thoughts to bruise  
My heart; yet had I aught to lose  
For but a glance from your dark eyes—  
I'd stake my all again!

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